

Final

Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc.

Archaeological Investigations of Potential  
Grave Sites at the Upper Corners Cemetary,  
Raystown Lake Recreation Area

Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania

prepared for:  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Baltimore District

February 2000

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF POTENTIAL GRAVE SITES  
AT THE UPPER CORNERS CEMETERY,  
RAYSTOWN LAKE RECREATION AREA,  
HUNTINGDON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**Final**

**Prepared for:**

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The project area for the construction of a conference center and related facilities at Raystown Lake Recreation Area is located in Penn Township, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. The study area is adjacent to Raystown Lake within the Ridge and Valley Physiographic Province. The total Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the facilities construction is over 1000 acres. The cemetery investigation was performed in conjunction with Phase Ib archaeological survey on a sample of a 70-acre area with the potential for archaeological resources and Phase II archaeological testing of four historic sites were previously conducted, which were reported separately.

Archaeological investigations were conducted at the Upper Corners or German Baptist Brethren Cemetery, which is part of Site 36Hu176. Testing consisted of the mechanical stripping of topsoil from the cemetery area, followed by hand clearing of the subsoil to delineate grave shafts. All visible grave shafts were mapped. Comparison with the map of the 1968 Cemetery Relocation Plan confirmed the presence of 26 of the 27 previously identified graves and resulted in the identification of seven previously unknown graves. In addition, differences were observed among the previously recorded graves, between four that had been heavily disturbed and 22 that were compact, clearly delineated, and showed no evidence of disturbance. Archaeological excavation is recommended, both for the previously unmarked graves and for the previously recorded graves where burials may still be present.

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### 1.1 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Phase Ib and II archaeological surveys reported herein is to assist the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations concerning the management of archaeological resources and graves subject to possible effects arising as a result of the proposed construction of new facilities at the Raystown Lake Recreation Area, Penn Township, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. Specifically, the task was to provide archaeological investigation of the Upper Corners Cemetery (Site 36Hu176) for the presence of unmarked graves.

The purpose of this survey was to map all visible grave shafts for the purpose of determining whether previously unrecognized interments were present within the cemetery. This report describes the findings of the survey as well as recommendations concerning possible additional archaeological research for the proposed construction of facilities at Raystown Lake Recreation Area.

### 1.2 Project Description

The project area within Raystown Lake Recreation Area is located in Penn Township, Huntingdon County, in the south central portion of the state of Pennsylvania and within the Upper Juniata River Basin (Figure 1.1). Raystown Lake was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1973, which impounded part of the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River with an earth-filled dam to create an 8,300 acre recreational pool. Raystown Lake was one of 25 properties out of 400 Corps properties identified in a 1992 study initiated by the Department of the Army to provide recommendations for new uses for its properties. This overall project was termed the Recreation Partnership Initiative (RPI). The proposed actions consist of construction of a hotel/conference center complex, golf course, road network, and associated utility facilities and lines on over 1,000 acres at Raystown Lake.

Prior to the initiation of this project, the Corps determined that the Raystown Lake RPI project would impact the Upper Corners Cemetery. A Phase Ia archaeological survey identified the cemetery as one of eight discrete locations likely to be directly impacted by the proposed project and further investigation was recommended (COE 1995). Phase II survey was performed on a portion of Site 36Hu176, which was defined as encompasses both the Upper Corners Church, also known as the German Baptist Brethren Church, and its associated cemetery.

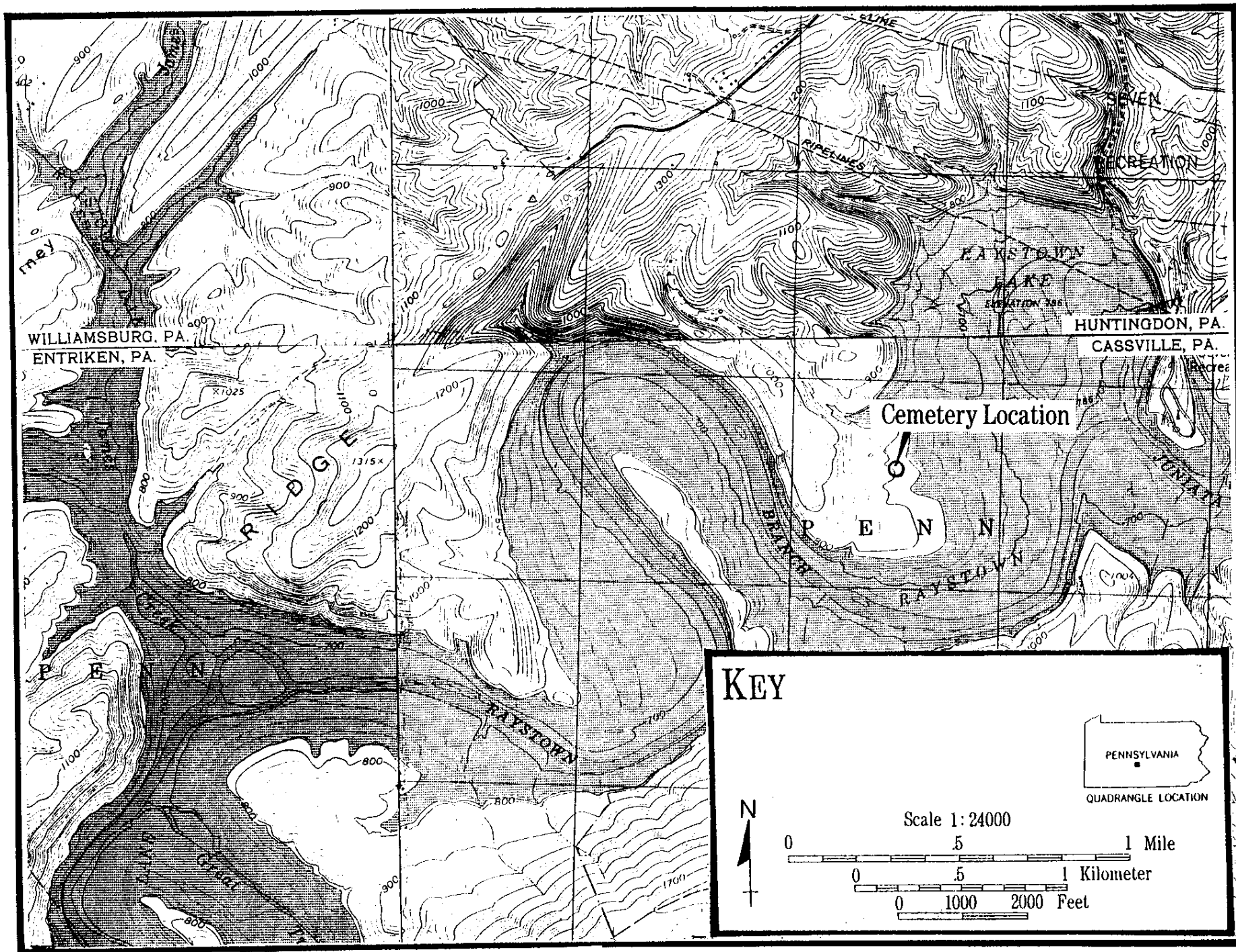


Figure 1.1 Vicinity of the Project Area Showing Site Location

The site is situated on the southwest side of the intersection of Township Roads 404 and 416, approximately 20 m west of the current shore of Raystown Lake (Figure 1.1). Before the lake was built, it would have been near the edge of a high terrace, overlooking the floodplain of the Raystown Branch. At the time of the field investigation, the vicinity of the site was covered with secondary growth, ranging from small shrubs to trees approximately 15-20 cm in diameter. The terrain sloped slightly down to the east. Soils in the vicinity are mapped as Raritan silt loam, 2-10% slopes (USDA 1978, Sheet 39). The Raritan series consists of deep, moderately well drained soils formed on Pleistocene-age terraces (USDA 1978:43).

The German Baptist Brethren or Upper Corners Church was identified in a previous survey as a partially fenced lot measuring 18.9 m (62') along the road front and extending 37.2 m (122') back (southwest) from the roadway (COE 1968). The church once stood on the front portion of this lot and the cemetery covered approximately the back half of the property. At the time of the present field survey, grave markers had been removed but an examination of the surface revealed the presence of regularly spaced depressions, marking the locations of graves. Two overgrown evergreen bushes were also present, corresponding to the locations of two shrubs shown on in the 1968 report. A white marble foot stone, marked "M. N." was found *in situ* beneath the western of these two shrubs, that had not been removed with the other grave markers. The shrubs and foot stone were used to help correlate specific grave shafts with those identified on the 1968 map.



### 2.1 Background Research Methods

Prior to the field survey, research was conducted to develop historic background information, creating a context to evaluate the field results. Background research included a review of secondary historical literature sources and historic period atlases and maps. Sources at the Huntingdon County Historical Society, Beeghly library at Juniata College, and Pattee Library at the Pennsylvania State University were examined. In addition, previous surveys of the cemetery were examined.

### 2.2 Site History

The Upper Corners Church was a branch of the German Baptist Brethren Church (Dunkers) at James Creek. The church for members living on the Raystown Branch was built in 1873. It was known as the “Bethel House” or “Corner” (Home Mission Board 1924:110). The church was a small frame structure, measuring 30' x 36' (9.1 x 11 m), made of timbers cut and planed by the church members (Kaylor 1981:96). It was situated on land owned at the time by John Brumbaugh, on the dividing line between the upper and lower Corner farmsteads worked by two of his sons, Benjamin and Henry. The lot was not deeded to the church, but was maintained by the Brumbaughs and later owners of the farm.

The church was situated towards the front of a small lot, with a graveyard behind it where church members were buried. Although the Brumbaughs helped initiate the construction of this branch church and owned the land where it was built, they also continued to worship on a regular basis in the James Creek church and at other churches in the area. Members of several member families were interred in the cemetery associated with the Upper Corners Church, but members of the Brumbaugh family continued to be interred in the family cemetery at “Timothy Meadows,” the old family homestead. The newly built church was shown on an 1873 map of Penn Township as a German Baptist Church bordering the west side of the road, with a school adjacent to it on the southeast (Pomeroy 1873; Figure 2.1). However, cemeteries were not marked separately on this map and the cemetery at Upper Corners may not have been created at that time.

The prospects of the Upper Corners Church looked promising when it was first built in 1873, but fifty years later the congregation had shrunk to a few members (Home Mission Board 1924:110). Among the previously identified graves in the cemetery, the oldest were two graves dating to 1878 and

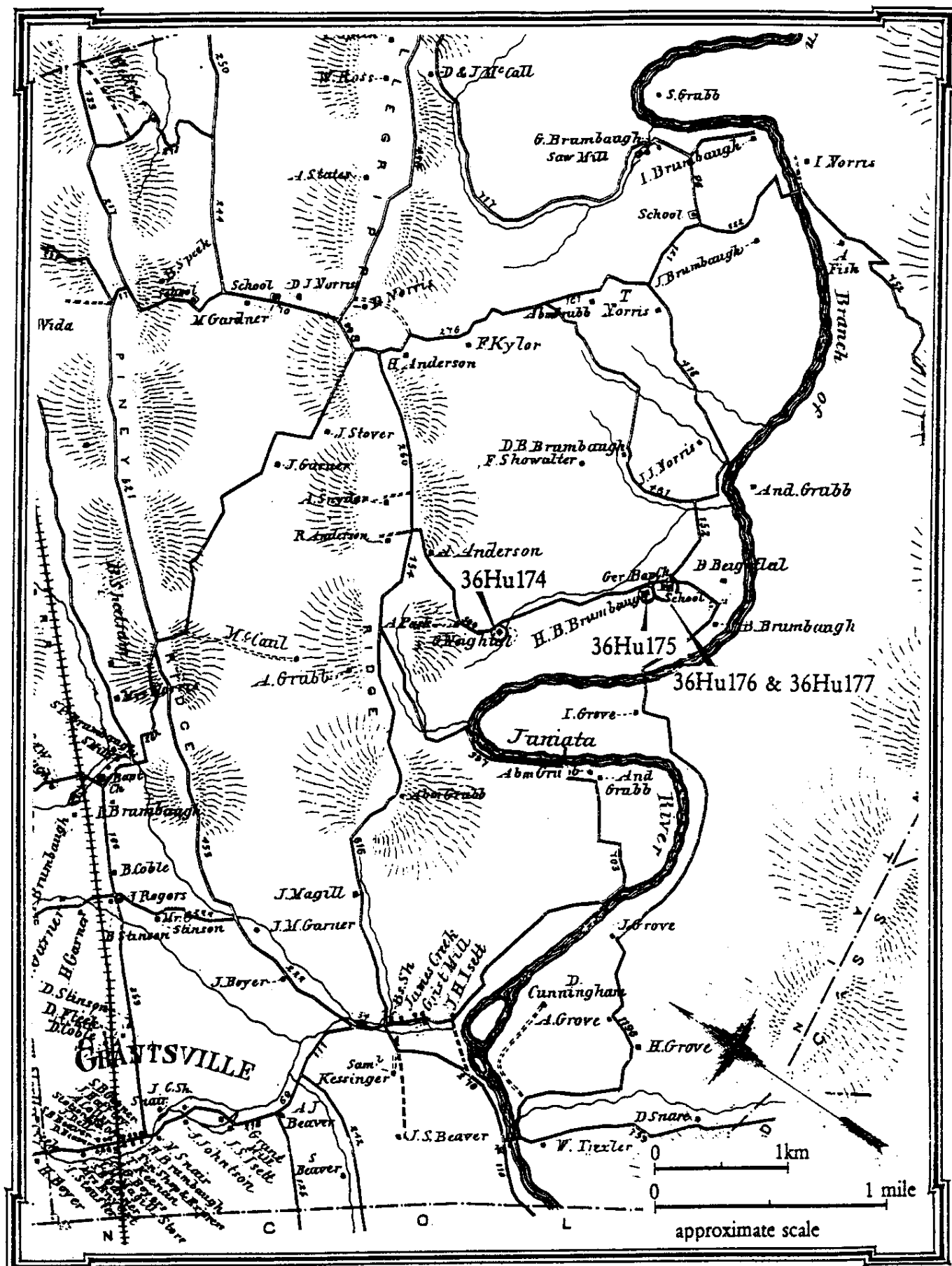


Figure 2.1 Vicinity of the Project Area in 1873, Showing Site Locations (A. Pomeroy & Co., Atlas of Blair and Huntingdon Counties, Pennsylvania, 1873)

the most recent was a grave dating to 1914, indicating that the cemetery was used for interments during this period. The congregation may have continued until 1948, at which time the church building was removed and some of its furnishings were sold off (Kaylor 1981:97). After 1948, the cemetery continued to be maintained by descendants of those buried there, and the lot was under the care of the adjacent property owners (COE 1968).

## **2.3 Previous Investigations**

The Upper Corners Cemetery was one of 13 cemeteries identified below the 815' elevation that was the initial project limit for the construction of Raystown Lake (COE 1995). A cemetery removal plan was therefore implemented to remove known graves before they were covered by the lake (COE 1968). Two photographs of the Upper Corners Cemetery in 1966 showed the rows of grave markers before their removal (Plates 2.1 and 2.2). One view was taken from the road towards the cemetery, confirming that the church building had been removed by this time and showing the two large ornamental shrubs that survived in the center of the cemetery. For the cemetery relocation plan, 27 marked graves were identified for removal at the Upper Corners Cemetery (COE 1968; Figure 2.2, Table 2.1). Ultimately, the lake was only impounded to a level of 786', leaving this site above water. The 1968 excavation and removal of interments from the Upper Corners Cemetery may have focused only on graves with headstones or other markers. Therefore, a further investigation of the cemetery was recommended, to determine whether unmarked graves occurred within the cemetery.

As part of the archaeological survey for the Upper Corners Recreation Partnership Initiative, Phase II archaeological survey was performed on the front (northeastern) portion of the church lot, where the church building once stood (Rue and Diamanti 1998). A portion of a stone foundation wall was uncovered, together with an ash midden and a low density of predominantly non-diagnostic historic and recent artifacts. This portion of the site did not have the potential to yield significant information relating to the history of the region and no further work was recommended for the front portion of the property.

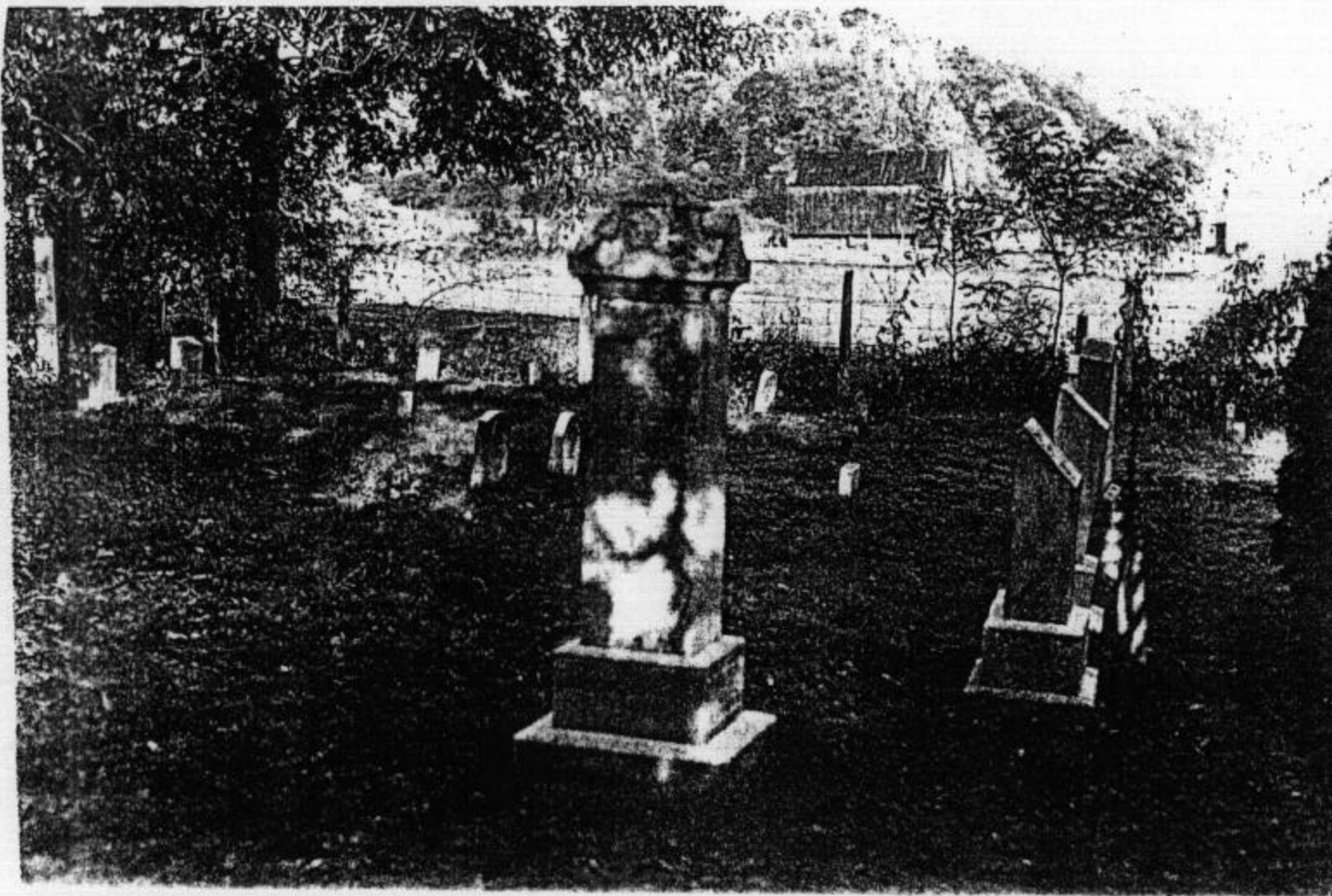


Plate 2.1      View of the Upper Corners Cemetery, with Corners Farm in Background

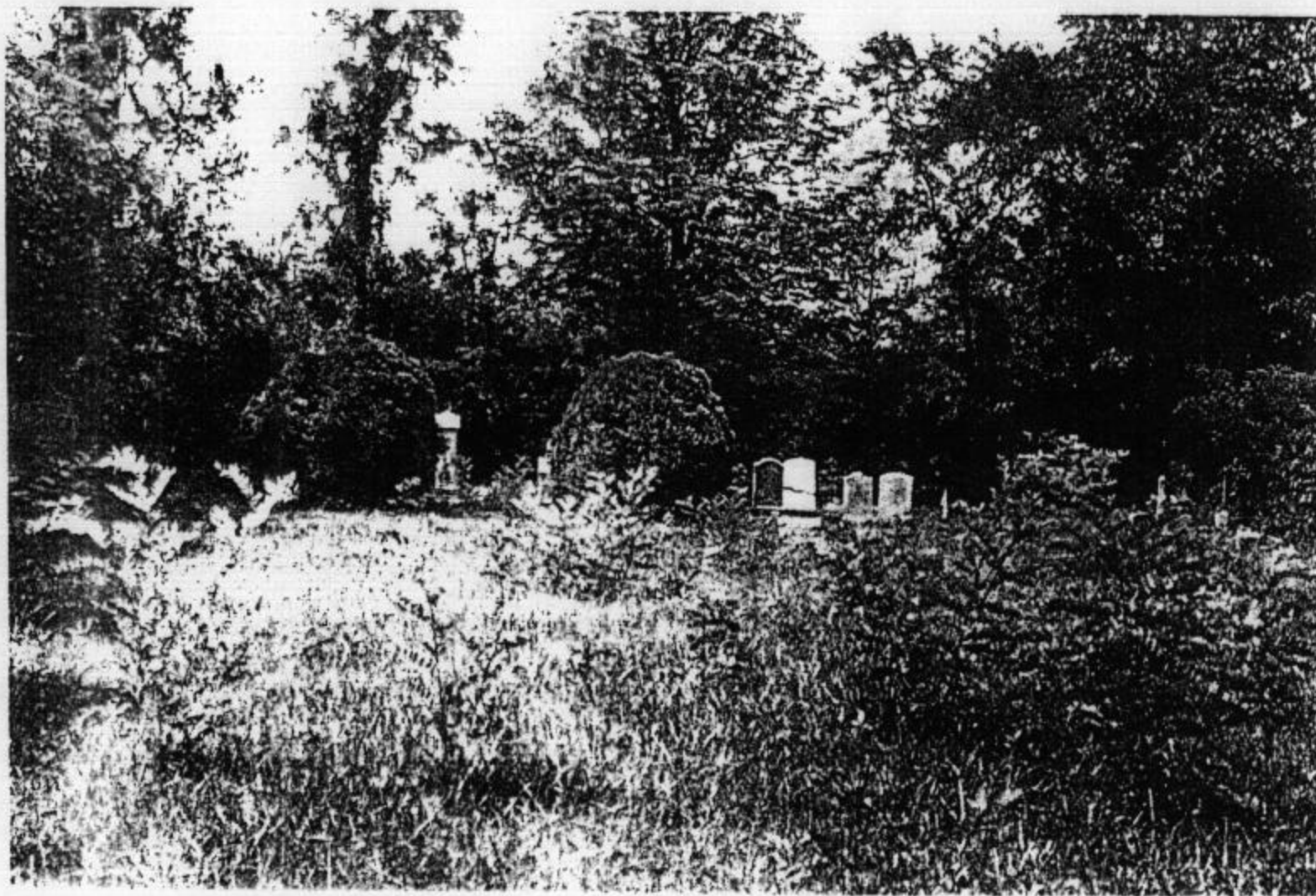


Plate 2.2 View of the Upper Corners Cemetery from the Road, Site 36Hu176



**Table 2.1**  
**Interments in Upper Corners Cemetery**

<b>Grave</b>	<b>Deceased</b>	<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Death Date</b>	<b>Reinterment</b>
1	Unknown	?	?	Old Stone Church
2	Ellen Showalter	1826	1904	Old Stone Church
3	Isaac Showalter	1836	1914	Old Stone Church
4	Sophia Showalter	1836	1888	Old Stone Church
5	Ethel G. Showalter	1903	1903	Old Stone Church
6	Alexandra McCall	1840	1906	Old Stone Church
7	Ellen McCall	1844	1902	Old Stone Church
8	Esaac Norris	1819	1898	Old Stone Church
9	Mary Norris	1823	1901	Old Stone Church
10	Thomas Norris	1815	1899	Old Stone Church
11	Nancy Norris	1824	1892	Old Stone Church
12	Unknown	?	?	Old Stone Church
13	Maggie Norris	1882	1887	Union Cemetery
14	Lula M. Norris	1891	1891	Union Cemetery
15	Unknown	?	?	Old Stone Church
16	Unknown	?	?	Old Stone Church
17	John A. Showalter	1832	1892	Old Stone Church
18	Susan A. Showalter	ND	ND	Old Stone Church
19	Unknown	?	?	Old Stone Church
20	Unknown	?	?	Old Stone Church
21	John J. Showalter	1873	1878	Old Stone Church
22	Abram Showalter	1874	1878	Old Stone Church
23	Norris (daughter)	1891	1891	Old Stone Church
24	Mary Ellen Fisher	1884	1889	White Church
25	McCall (son)	1898	1898	Union Cemetery
26	Unknown	?	?	Old Stone Church
27	Cyrus G. Garner	1879	1880	Old Stone Church

Source: COE, 1968.

## 3.0 FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

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### 3.1 Field Methodology

Field investigations of the cemetery consisted of three stages, including site preparation, mechanical stripping, and hand clearing. Site preparation included the cutting and removal of the secondary forest vegetation to facilitate the mechanical stripping. It also included the establishment of reference datum points, including two points on the township roadway and one in a tree trunk southeast of the stripped area. Known reference points within the cemetery were mapped in relation to these points, including the ornamental shrubs and a marble grave marker, identified as the foot stone of Grave 9, that had not been previously removed. This marker was removed prior to stripping to prevent damage to the stone by the backhoe. The presence of several large trees that likely existed when the cemetery was still in use were used to define the limits of the area to be mechanically stripped. Traces of a fence line were also found along the northwest and southeast sides of the cemetery.

In the second stage of investigation, the topsoil and uppermost portion of the B-horizon soil was removed to a depth of approximately 40-50 cm below the surface. This stripping exposed areas of intact subsoil, predominantly a yellowish brown to brownish yellow sandy loam. Several yellowish red stains were apparent after the stripping, but grave shafts could not be clearly delineated. In the third stage of investigation, the stripped area was therefore cleared by hand, first by shovel scraping, then by troweling the exposed surface of the subsoil to delineate the boundaries of specific grave shafts (Plate 3.1). In one portion of the cemetery (vicinity of Graves 17-20), the individual graves were difficult to distinguish at this level. The backhoe was therefore used to remove an additional 20-30 cm of subsoil from this area, in the hope the exposure of the deeper subsoil would more clearly reveal the limits of the grave shafts.

Following hand clearing of the stripped area, the boundaries of individual grave shafts were marked with corner nails and outlines of string (Figure 3.1). All delineated graves were mapped and the resulting map was compared with the 1968 Cemetery Relocation map to identify previously known and previously unknown graves at the site. All grave shafts were measured, mapped, and photographed.

### 3.2 Field Survey Results

A total of 33 grave shafts were delineated and mapped in at the Upper corners Cemetery (Figure 3.1). Comparison of the results of the field mapping with the map produced for the cemetery relocation plan indicated that 26 of the 27 previously recorded graves were identified





Plate 3.1 View of Hand Troweling to Delineate Grave Shafts



Plate 3.2 Graves 8 and 9 With Intact Pedestals

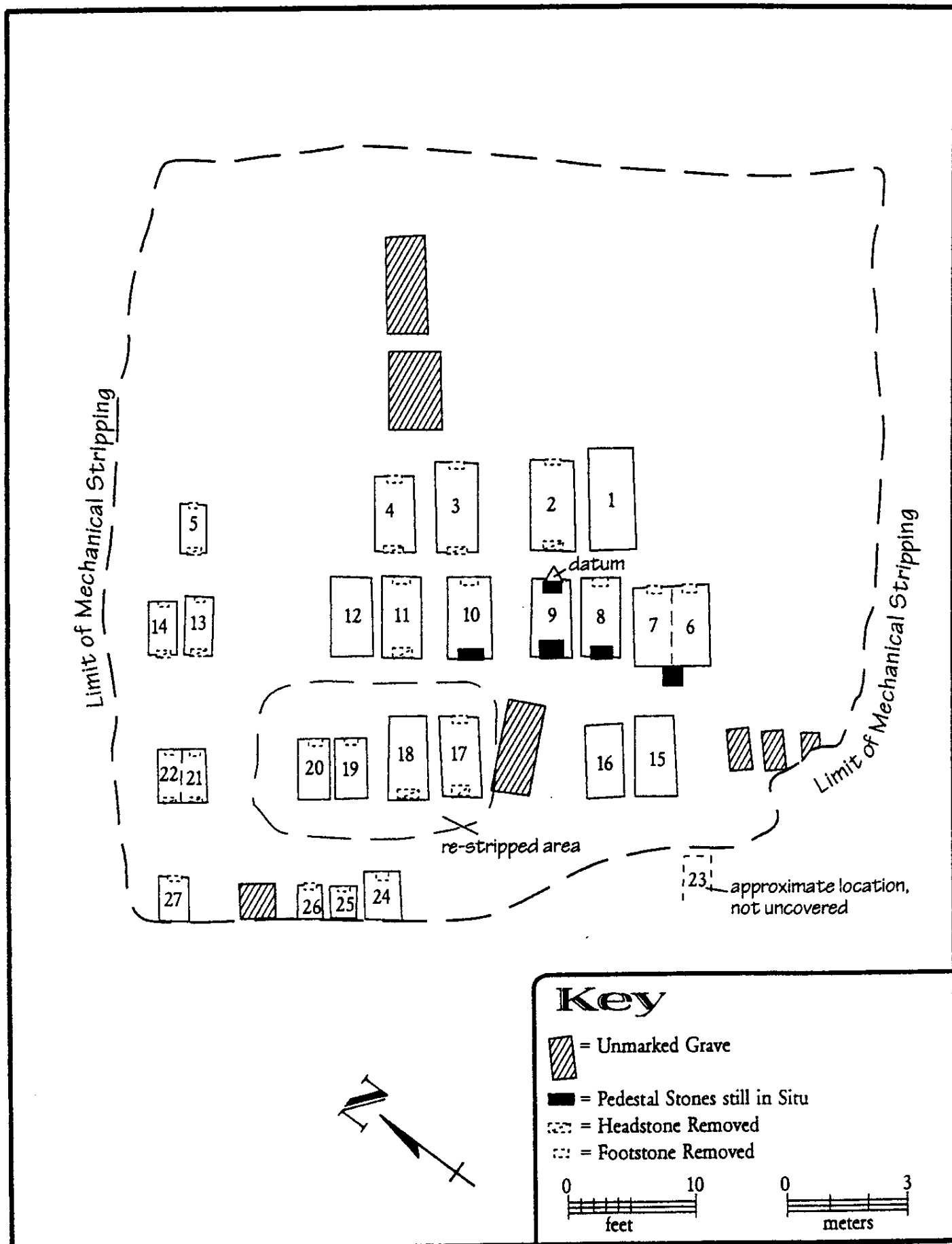


Figure 3.1 Map of Stripped Cemetery Area, Showing Grave Shafts

during the field investigation. The comparison showed that the location of Grave 23 lay outside the stripped area, in the south corner of the cemetery where several large trees were present. It was not possible to perform mechanical stripping in this area of the site.

Comparison of the field results with the previous survey indicated that seven previously unmarked graves were identified. Three of these were small (children's) grave shafts that formed a cluster at the end of a row, southeast of Grave 15. This placement was similar to the groups of children's graves mapped at the northwestern ends of several rows. A fourth small grave shaft was found in a space between Graves 26 and 27, which was recorded in the previous survey as an empty space between burials. Similarly, the fifth unmarked grave was a tall (adult) grave shaft found in the gap between previously recorded Graves 16 and 17. This fifth grave shaft was oriented at a different angle from the other grave shafts in the row, suggesting that it was interred before the others were present to show the general alignment of the row. The sixth and seventh unmarked graves were two large (adult) grave shafts were found towards the front of the cemetery, marking two additional rows of grave shafts not previously noted in the cemetery. The sixth grave, located northeast of Graves 3 and 4, was unusually wide for a grave shaft. It was not clear whether this stain represented one grave or two, because it was wider than other single grave shafts in the cemetery, but not as wide as the stains that corresponded to a pair of indistinguishable graves, such as Graves 6 and 7 or Graves 21 and 22. In contrast, the seventh unmarked grave, located northeast of the sixth, was unusually long. Other grave shafts in the cemetery were found to vary in length from approximately 3' (0.9 m) to approximately 6' (1.8 m), but only Grave 1 was similar to the seventh unmarked grave in being approximately 8' (2.4 m) long. Although the sixth and seventh unmarked graves were placed to represent two additional rows at the front of the cemetery (i.e. closer to the church) no additional grave shafts were found in these rows.

During the hand-clearing of the cemetery, it became apparent that the vicinity of Graves 17-20 had been more heavily disturbed than other portions of the cemetery in the past. Unlike most of the grave shafts, which could be clearly delineated as rectangular stains with straight sides and right-angled corners, the limits of these four grave shafts were difficult to distinguish. This area was mechanically stripped a second time, in the hope that the grave shafts would be more clearly defined at a greater depth below the surface. However, even after the second stripping, these four grave shafts had poorly defined, indistinct edges. They were also characterized by differences in fill. The other grave shafts in the cemetery, both the previously recorded and the previously unmarked graves, were characterized by a compact fill that was more reddish in color than the surrounding subsoil and lacked roots, rocks, or other signs of disturbance. In contrast, the fill of Graves 17-20 was characterized by a high density of rootlets, a less compact soil, and the presence of a distinct "cemetery" smell often associated with

organic decomposition. These differences in fill and delineation suggested that these four graves had been more extensively disturbed than the other grave shafts in the recent past.

No evidence of head stones or other grave markers was associated with the unmarked graves. The marble foot stone of previously recorded Grave 9 was found and removed prior to the mechanical stripping. In addition, four sections of mortared field stones were found *in situ* in the subsoil over grave shafts. These likely formed the pedestals on which grave head stones had been set. The pedestal for the joint headstone that had marked Graves 6 and 7 was placed outside the area of their grave shafts, but the pedestals for the head stones of Graves 8, 9, and 10 had clearly been constructed within the boundaries of the grave shaft, indicating that the head stone had been placed over the grave shaft. These sections of mortared stone were still *in situ*, covering part of each grave shaft (Plate 3.2).

Considered in conjunction, the evidence that only four of the previously marked graves had been heavily disturbed in the recent past (Graves 17-20) and the indication that the pedestals covering three of the previously marked grave shafts had not been disturbed (Graves 8-10), the similarity in compactness and clear visibility between the previously unmarked graves and the rest of the previously recorded grave shafts suggested that the contents of those previously recorded graves, like the contents of the unmarked graves, had not been disinterred in past as previously assumed. Instead, only the grave markers may have been moved.

## 4.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 4.1 Summary

Mechanical stripping and hand clearing uncovered an area of approximately 18 m x 18 m (60' x 60'). Within this area, 33 grave shafts were delineated. Comparison of these grave shaft locations with the previous survey of the cemetery indicated that 26 of the 27 previously recorded graves were delineated. Grave 23 was found to lie outside the stripped area, in a corner of the cemetery where the presence of large trees made mechanical stripping infeasible. The remaining seven grave shafts did not correspond to previously recorded grave locations, indicating that unmarked graves were present in the cemetery.

The locations of Graves 17-20 were difficult to identify, because soils in this portion of the cemetery had been heavily disturbed. These four grave shafts were characterized by irregular, poorly defined boundaries and a less compact fill with many small rootlets and a distinctive odor of decomposition that is often associated with cemeteries. In contrast, the unmarked graves and the rest of the previously recorded graves were characterized by clearly defined grave shafts with straight sides, right-angled corners, and a reddish, compact, odor-free fill. The similarity in characteristics between the unmarked grave shafts and the majority of the previously recorded grave shafts suggested that the latter, like the former, had not been disturbed or disinterred in the recent past. The presence of intact mortared stone pedestals covering parts of the grave shafts of three previously recorded graves (Graves 8, 9, and 10) further suggested that these three, and by association also the other compact, clearly delineated graves, had not been disinterred.

In summary, the contrast between the four heavily disturbed grave shafts on the one hand and the unmarked graves and other previously recorded graves on the other hand, raise the possibility that only those four may have been disinterred and removed when the cemetery relocation plan was executed. For the other graves, it is possible that only the head stones or other markers were removed, without exhuming the individuals buried in those graves.

### 4.2 Recommendations

The seven unmarked grave shafts represent burials that were not accounted for in the previous cemetery relocation plan. These four graves are therefore likely to contain interments that would be impacted by the proposed project. It is recommended that these seven unmarked grave shafts be excavated and that any burials thus exposed be reinterred at a suitable location after appropriate study.

The question of whether the burials have been removed from any of the previously recorded graves in the cemetery should also be addressed through further archaeological field research. The previously recorded graves can be grouped into three classes, including undisturbed graves partially covered by intact stone pedestals, undisturbed graves without pedestals, and heavily disturbed graves. It is recommended that several graves in each of these classes be excavated to determine whether burials are still present within the graves. If such burials are found to be present in one or more of these classes, it is recommended that all the graves in that class of graves be excavated, so that any burials likely to be impacted by the proposed project can be exhumed and reburied at a suitable location after appropriate study.

The southernmost corner of the cemetery could not be fully investigated, because the presence of large trees precluded mechanical stripping of this area. If investigation of the other grave shafts in the cemetery shows that burials are still present in the previously recorded graves, additional investigation of this area is also recommended. Minimally, the probable location of Grave 23 should be cleared by hand to identify the shaft and remove any burial that would be present. The overall layout of graves in the cemetery suggested that the small graves of children were likely to be placed in this corner. Therefore, areas adjacent to Grave 23 should also be investigated for the presence of additional unmarked graves and any such graves should be exhumed if found.

The exhumation of graves is necessary for the safe removal and relocation of burials. However, it is recommended that this action be performed as an archaeological study, because the examination of burial of from a relatively short time span in a small rural area has the potential to yield significant information about the history of the region. In addition to the information on age, sex, health and other physical attributes that could be learned from an examination of the bones, archaeological investigation would yield information on cultural characteristics reflected in the dress and accouterments of burials.

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